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Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES CHARLES H. TWINING FOR REASON 1.4 (B,D
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11. (U) Post reported reftel on a January 31 meeting of the principal candidates for President, one intended to exchange views, work for success of the transition, and put together a code of conduct. A subsequent statement indicated they also agreed to ask the transitional authorities to abstain from any actions that could influence the choice of the voters, to request a useful dialogue with the Military Council, and to adopt a framework of working relations among the candidates. The fifteen present set up a working committee for follow up.

12. (U) The four man working committee called on President Vall February 5. The organizer of all this, Dahane Ould Ahmed Mahmoud, told the press that the President reaffirmed his commitment to transparency and promised to meet the candidates to discuss all the problems. Vall reportedly assured them of the intention of the leadership to respect the law forbidding transitional authorities to support a candidate, an assurance that also included a prohibition on the use of public resources for electoral ends. Dahane said that that would contribute to calm things for the good of democracy in the country. He added that the Committee emphasized to Vall the importance of the March 11 election, whose success would redound to both the Military Council and the country.

13. (C) Dahane contacted us February 6 to express regrets over an incident at the University in which we were caught briefly the previous day, chalking it up to youthful enthusiasm. Referring to a discussion we had had earlier regarding the utility of candidates joining together and agreeing on the rules, as well as of a dialogue with the military, we said we were pleased that he had been able to advance both objectives. With obvious pride, Dahane said he hosted the January 31 gathering "to calm the situation." He said the meeting with the President February 5 was a useful step, the President in turn inviting all the candidates to dinner February 8. Dahane said he told the President he hoped the entire Military Council would participate, without a commitment in return from Vall.

14. (C) Comment. These are healthy moves. The candidates will hopefully be able to agree on the rules by which the campaign, and its aftermath, will take place. More importantly, if the dinner is more than food, the military and civilians will -- as candidate Ould Daddah desired when we met with him -- be able to lay all the cards on the table and discuss their hopes and concerns. Without setting expectations too high, these are good starts.
Twining